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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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SUBJECT: "Idle Hour Ingenuity"...Information from the Farm Security Administration,
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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It's fall now and winter's on the way. Days are getting shorter and evenings longer. Do you know how some farm women spend those extra evening hours, as well as other times, interestingly and profitably? Some women in Farm Security borrower families of the U. S. Department of Agriculture offer examples of "idle hour" ingenuity and resourcefulness. Here are a few:

They reseat chairs with plaited cornshucks, or weave bottoms for chairs with twine or strips of cloth. They upholster old rocking chairs with discarded sofa pillows, or by padding the seats and backs and covering them with figured cloth. They stain straight-back chairs and other chairs with homemade walnut stain, or polish them with homemade wax.

If chairs are scarce they may make stools from nail kegs, by padding the ends with scraps of cloth and putting colorful "skirts" on them to make them more attractive.

They stuff homemade divans or studio couches with cat-tails - gathered, dried, and stripped from the stalks. They make mattresses from clean straw when they can't afford to make them with cotton, or to buy them readymade. They make window shades from broomsticks and heavily-starched cloth, draperies from unbleached muslin dyed various colors, hooked rugs and other rugs from old stockings and rags, and door mats from corn shucks.

Perhaps more than anything else they use their old standby, the flour sack, to make sheets, bedspreads, pillow cases, tablecloths, luncheon sets, dresser scarfs, and articles of clothing--including layettes. A little dye or colored bias tape, or simple handwork design, is often used to brighten them up.

A woman in Livingston Parish, Louisiana likes to tell about an experience she had when she entered several samples of feed sack handwork in a State Fair exhibit. Later in the day when she couldn't find her things among the "sack article exhibits", she found them with the linen exhibits. What's more, they had been judged by mistake as linen and, of all things, wore the blue ribbon for first prize!

